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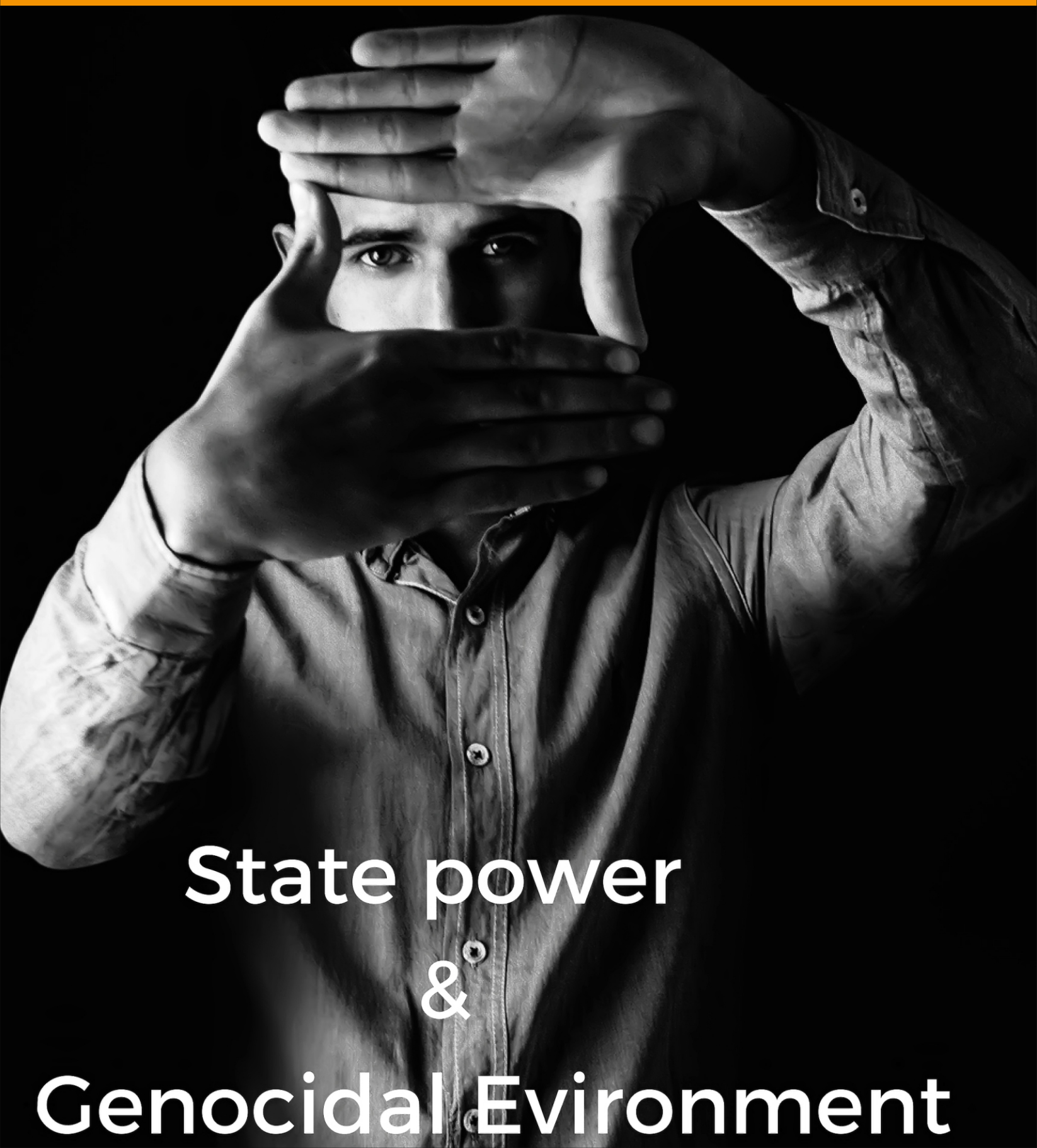

State power & Genocidal Evironment

अपथ्याशीवबालः स सामन्तसहितस्ततः।
जनानाम जातिविध्वंसे सूहभट्टः कृतोद्यमः।।

- Pandit Jonaraja, Father of Genocide Studies

Pandit Jonaraja, the author of second Rajtarangini that follows the Rajtarangini of Kalhan, was a Kashmiri Shaivite Bhatta Brahmin. His real name was Jyotsanakar, meaning the creator of moonlight. This poetic name was true to his being. He was an exceptional and sensitive poet, well versed in history, astrology, Ayurveda, Yoga and subtler aspects of all these disciplines. He was a renowned Sanskrit scholar. His year of birth as per records available is estimated as 1389-90.

Like Kalhan he has written the history of Kashmir in poetry. But, that is not all about him. He has recorded the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits in detail and delineated its aspects like the present day genocide scholars.

Jati-Vidhwans - This is the word Jonaraja has coined to describe genocide. He has defined genocide and Raphael Lemkin's definition which came in 20th century closely mirrors Jonaraja's definition. He has even pointed out the special intent that motivates the perpetrator and given a very sensitive and vivid account of how an ideology radicalises a regime and effects a total change in its mode of operation that leads to genocide. He has made it clear that the mind of a perpetrator is at a very low level of maturity. That is the view held by present day genocide scholars also. His account of the first exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, if placed in correct context, is no different from the atrocities the community faced in 1990.

Roots of the field of genocide studies are found in Pandit Jonaraja. He, in every sense is **"Father of Genocide Studies."**

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How does State power contribute to genocidal environment

One of the primary ways states contribute to a genocidal environment is through propaganda and ideological manipulation. Governments can use state-controlled media and educational systems to disseminate hateful and dehumanizing rhetoric about targeted groups.

Sunanda Vashisht
Editor-in-Chief, Pavak

State power is a potent tool that can shape societies in profound ways, including creating environments conducive to genocide. Genocide, the deliberate and systematic extermination of a particular group, often involves a combination of propaganda, institutionalized violence, legal measures, and other state-led actions. By examining historical and contemporary examples, we can understand how state power contributes to the development and perpetuation of genocidal environments.

Propaganda and Ideology

One of the primary ways states contribute to a genocidal environment is through propaganda and ideological manipulation. Governments can use state-controlled media and educational systems to disseminate hateful and dehumanizing rhetoric about targeted groups. This form of propaganda serves to justify and normalize discrimination and violence.

In Nazi Germany, the state employed extensive propaganda to vilify Jews, portraying them as a dangerous and corrupting influence on society. The Nazis used state-controlled media, such as newspapers and films, to spread anti-Semitic ideologies and foster public hatred. This dehumanization laid the groundwork for the Holocaust by creating a societal environment where the mass murder of Jews became both justifiable and accepted by many.

Institutionalization of Violence

States can institutionalize violence by creating and utilizing state organs specifically designed to carry out atrocities. This includes the establishment of specialized institutions and the use of state resources for violent ends.

During the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, the Rwandan government, dominated by the Hutu majority, orchestrated mass violence against the Tutsi minority. The state utilized the military, police, and local government officials to execute systematic killings. State-run radio stations incited violence by broadcasting hate-filled messages, and local authorities played a crucial role in organizing and carrying out the genocide. The state's institutionalized violence transformed ordinary citizens into perpetrators of mass murder.

Control and Suppression

Another significant aspect of state power in creating a genocidal environment is the suppression of dissent and opposition. By controlling the flow of information and eliminating political opponents, states can prevent resistance and facilitate genocidal actions.

Under Joseph Stalin's regime, the Soviet government conducted purges and mass repressions against perceived enemies of the state. The Great Purge of the late 1930s involved the widespread arrest, torture, and execution of political opponents, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens. By suppressing dissent and instilling fear, the state created an environment where atrocities were carried out with minimal resistance or scrutiny.

Legal and Bureaucratic Measures

Genocidal regimes often use legal and bureaucratic measures to facilitate their goals. This can involve creating and enforcing laws that discriminate against targeted groups, thereby institutionalizing their persecution.

During the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1917, the Ottoman Empire enacted policies that systematically targeted the Armenian population.

States can institutionalize violence by creating and utilizing state organs specifically designed to carry out atrocities. This includes the establishment of specialized institutions and the use of state resources for violent ends.

The government passed laws that facilitated the confiscation of Armenian property, restricted their movement, and mandated forced deportations. Bureaucratic mechanisms, such as the establishment of death marches and concentration camps, were employed to carry out the systematic extermination of Armenians. The legal framework provided a semblance of legitimacy to the mass killings and forced relocations.

International Influence and Isolation

The role of international influence and isolation can also impact the genocidal environment. Some regimes may benefit from international support or lack of intervention, which enables them to pursue genocidal policies with relative impunity.

The Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot, implemented a radical communist agenda in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. The regime's genocidal policies were facilitated by international indifference and limited external intervention. The Khmer Rouge's radical transformation of Cambodian society, combined with its isolationist stance, allowed it to carry out mass executions and forced labor without significant international interference.

Economic Exploitation

Economic policies and practices can also contribute to a genocidal environment by exacerbating the vulnerability of targeted groups. By depriving these groups of resources and opportunities, states can create conditions that make them more susceptible to violence.

In the Darfur region of Sudan, economic exploitation and competition over resources played a role in the genocide that began in 2003. The Sudanese government, which was implicated in the violence, encouraged Arab militias to attack non-Arab communities in Darfur. The conflict was partly fueled by competition for land and resources, and the state's policies exacerbated existing tensions. The government's support for the militias and its role in the economic exploitation of the region contributed to the genocidal environment.

Genocides driven by powerful states are among the most devastating forms of mass violence, as they often involve extensive resources and institutional power. Preventing such genocides requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the root causes, intervenes effectively during early warning signs, and promotes long-term systemic changes.

Early Warning and Prevention

Effective prevention begins with early detection. International organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), play a crucial role in monitoring potential warning signs of genocide. Early warning systems can track indicators such as hate speech, discriminatory laws, and escalating violence.

The ICC has been instrumental in monitoring and responding to early signs of potential genocides. By investigating and prosecuting individuals involved in genocidal activities, the ICC helps deter future atrocities and encourages early intervention. For instance, the ICC's involvement in the cases of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has highlighted the importance of early action against state-led genocides.

Diplomatic and Economic Pressure

Diplomatic measures, including sanctions and international pressure, can be used to dissuade states from pursuing genocidal policies. Economic sanctions and travel bans imposed on state leaders and officials can weaken the regime's capacity to carry out mass violence.

International sanctions and diplomatic pressure played a crucial role in ending apartheid in South Africa. The global community's concerted efforts to isolate the South African government economically and politically contributed to the dismantling of the apartheid system. This model demonstrates how coordinated international pressure can influence state behavior and prevent systemic violence.

Humanitarian Intervention

When early warning signs escalate into active genocidal campaigns, timely humanitarian intervention becomes essential. This can include military intervention, peacekeeping missions, and humanitarian aid to protect vulnerable populations. The NATO-led intervention in Kosovo in 1999 is an example of a successful international response to prevent further genocidal violence. The intervention halted the Serbian forces' campaign of ethnic cleansing and provided a protective environment for civilians. This case illustrates the importance of international willingness to act decisively when genocide is imminent.

Strengthening International Norms and Institutions

Strengthening international legal frameworks and institutions can help deter state-driven genocides. The establishment and reinforcement of international norms

When early warning signs escalate into active genocidal campaigns, timely humanitarian intervention becomes essential. This can include military intervention, peacekeeping missions, and humanitarian aid to protect vulnerable populations. The NATO-led intervention in Kosovo in 1999 is an example of a successful international response to prevent further genocidal violence. The intervention halted the Serbian forces' campaign of ethnic cleansing and provided a protective environment for civilians.

Promoting human rights, democratic governance, and strong civil society organizations can create environments that are less susceptible to genocide. Strong institutions, accountable governance, and an active civil society can provide checks and balances that prevent the concentration of power and protect minority groups.

against genocide, coupled with robust mechanisms for accountability, can discourage states from engaging in genocidal acts.

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) is a critical international legal instrument aimed at preventing genocide. The Convention defines genocide, establishes legal obligations for states to prevent and punish it, and provides a basis for international intervention. Upholding and enforcing the principles of this Convention is vital for preventing genocidal actions.

Promoting Human Rights and Rule of Law

Promoting human rights, democratic governance, and strong civil society organizations can create environments that are less susceptible to genocide. Strong institutions, accountable governance, and an active civil society can provide checks and balances that prevent the concentration of power and protect minority groups.

Following the end of apartheid, South Africa focused on building democratic institutions, promoting human rights, and strengthening civil society. The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) helped address past atrocities and fostered a culture of accountability. These efforts contributed to preventing the resurgence of genocidal violence and promoting social cohesion.

Education and Awareness

Educating populations about the dangers of genocide and promoting awareness can help build resilience against hate and intolerance. Education programs that highlight the consequences of genocide and promote values of tolerance and respect can reduce the likelihood of genocidal ideologies taking root.

Post-World War II, many countries have implemented Holocaust education programs to educate younger generations about the atrocities committed during the Holocaust. These programs aim to prevent the recurrence of such violence by fostering understanding and vigilance against hate and discrimination.

Preventing state-driven genocides requires a comprehensive approach that combines early warning systems, diplomatic and economic pressure, international intervention, strengthened legal frameworks, support for democratic institutions, and public education. Historical and contemporary examples underscore the importance of these strategies in mitigating the risk of genocidal violence. By implementing these measures proactively, the international community can work to prevent genocides and protect vulnerable populations from the horrors of state-sponsored atrocities.

State power, when directed towards harmful and discriminatory ends, can significantly contribute to the creation and perpetuation of a genocidal environment. Through propaganda, institutionalized violence, control and suppression, legal measures, international influence, and economic exploitation, states can foster conditions that make genocide possible. Historical and contemporary examples demonstrate that understanding the mechanisms by which state power can enable genocide is crucial for preventing and addressing such atrocities in the future. By recognizing these patterns, the international community can better safeguard against the emergence of genocidal environments and work towards a more just and humane world.

State power and Genocidal Environment: The case of continual Genocide of Kashmiri Pandits

The Kashmiri Pandits, whose roots in the Kashmir Valley trace back over 5,000 years, have a rich cultural and religious heritage that is deeply intertwined with the region's history. Despite their contributions to the cultural, educational, and religious landscape of Kashmir, their history has been marked by periods of severe persecution.

Tito Ganju
Chairman, JIGAS

This study examines the genocide of the Kashmiri Pandit community, a Hindu minority in the predominantly Muslim region of Jammu and Kashmir, India, by analyzing historical and contemporary factors that have contributed to their persecution. Genocide, as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), involves acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group. The Kashmiri Pandit genocide is an example of how state power, insurgency, and societal factors can intertwine to create and sustain genocidal environments.

Pre-Partition Era

The Kashmiri Pandits, whose roots in the Kashmir Valley trace back over 5,000 years, have a rich cultural and religious heritage that is deeply intertwined with the region's history. Despite their contributions to the cultural, educational, and religious landscape of Kashmir, their history has been marked by periods of severe persecution. Notably, during the Mughal and Afghan rule, the community faced forced conversions and oppression. The 15th-century Kashmiri historian Jonaraja documented the hardships endured by the community, particularly during the reign of Sultan Sikandar, known as Sikandar Butshikan (the iconoclast). Sikandar's rule was characterized by the destruction of temples and forced migration of Hindus, laying early seeds of religious intolerance that would resurface in later centuries.

Post-Partition and Early Independence

The partition of India in 1947 and the subsequent creation of Pakistan led to significant political turmoil in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly affecting the Kashmiri Pandits. The accession of Kashmir to India resulted in a protracted conflict that altered the demographic and political landscape of the region. During this period, the Kashmiri Pandit community experienced sporadic violence and social ostracism, which foreshadowed the genocidal actions that would emerge in the decades to come.

The Tribal Invasion of 1947, launched from Pakistan, saw atrocities committed against Kashmiri Pandits due to their religious identity and loyalty to India. The invaders committed mass killings, rapes, and looting, creating an atmosphere of fear and distrust between communities. This initial wave of violence set a precedent for the targeted persecution of Kashmiri Pandits in later years.

The Genocidal Environment: The 1989 Exodus

The late 1980s marked a turning point for the Kashmiri Pandit community as the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir escalated. Militant groups, motivated by Islamist ideologies and supported by Pakistan, targeted Kashmiri Pandits through systematic killings, threats, and intimidation. This campaign of violence culminated in the mass exodus of approximately 100,000 to 140,000 Kashmiri Pandits from the valley in 1989-1990.

Targeted Killings: Prominent Kashmiri Pandits were assassinated to create a climate of fear within the community. Notable figures, including Tika Lal Taploo, a lawyer and politician, were brutally murdered, sending a clear message to the Pandit community. These killings, often aimed at leaders and influential members, further demoralized the remaining population.

Threatening Notices: Militant groups issued ultimatums demanding that Pandits leave the valley or face death. Pamphlets and public announcements, often delivered through loudspeakers from mosques, incited violence and

The late 1980s marked a turning point for the Kashmiri Pandit community as the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir escalated. Militant groups, motivated by Islamist ideologies and supported by Pakistan, targeted Kashmiri Pandits through systematic killings, threats, and intimidation.

The Indian government's response to the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits has been widely criticized for its failure to provide adequate protection and its subsequent neglect of the displaced population. This inaction and neglect have contributed to the perpetuation of a genocidal environment.

amplified the terror among the Pandit community.

Destruction of Property: The destruction of homes, temples, and other properties belonging to Kashmiri Pandits was a deliberate attempt to erase their cultural and physical presence in the valley. Sacred sites, such as the Temples, were desecrated, symbolizing the erasure of the community's historical and cultural identity.

Role of the State

The Indian government's response to the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits has been widely criticized for its failure to provide adequate protection and its subsequent neglect of the displaced population. This inaction and neglect have contributed to the perpetuation of a genocidal environment.

Security Failures: The government failed to prevent or respond effectively to the militant attacks on Kashmiri Pandits. Despite intelligence reports indicating rising threats, proactive measures were lacking, allowing militants to operate with impunity and further endanger the Pandit community.

Neglect in Rehabilitation: The government's lack of comprehensive rehabilitation programs for the displaced Kashmiri Pandits has led to prolonged suffering in refugee camps with poor living conditions. Camps in Jammu and Delhi were overcrowded, lacking basic amenities, and contributing to health issues among the displaced. The absence of adequate support systems exacerbated the Pandits' suffering and hindered their ability to rebuild their lives.

Political Apathy: Successive Indian governments have often sidelined the issue of the Kashmiri Pandit genocide, resulting in a lack of substantial political will to address the community's plight. Election manifestos and political rhetoric rarely prioritized the recognition, reparation of Genocide ,resettlement and rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits, contributing to their prolonged displacement and marginalization.

Contemporary Situation: Continuing Persecution and Institutional Discrimination

Despite the initial exodus, the Kashmiri Pandit community continues to face persecution. Incidents of violence and threats against those who have attempted to return to the valley persist, underscoring the sustained genocidal intent against the community. Reports of sporadic killings and threats serve as constant reminders of the risks involved in returning.

Recent Attacks: In recent years, several attacks have targeted Kashmiri Pandits who attempted to return or reclaim their property. These incidents reinforce the message that the valley remains hostile to their presence, perpetuating the displacement of the community.

Institutional Discrimination: The Kashmiri Pandit community also faces institutional discrimination, with barriers in access to education, employment, and political representation continuing to marginalize them. Policies and narratives that deny or minimize their suffering contribute to the erasure of their historical and cultural identity.

Educational Barriers: Quotas and reservations in education often overlook the displaced community, further entrenching their marginalization. The lack of educational opportunities hampers the socio-economic mobility of Pandit youth, limiting their prospects.

Employment Discrimination: Displaced Kashmiri Pandits often face difficulties in securing employment due to biases and lack of recognition of their qualifications and experiences. This economic marginalization further deepens their vulnerability.

Political Marginalization: The lack of political representation and voice in governance has led to the continued neglect of Kashmiri Pandit issues. Efforts to address their concerns are often superficial and fail to address the root causes of their displacement and marginalization.

Theoretical Perspectives: State Power, Social Factors, and Genocide

The relationship between state power and genocide is complex and multifaceted. In the case of the Kashmiri Pandits, state inaction and complicity have played significant roles in perpetuating the genocidal environment. Political theorists argue that state inaction in the face of genocide can be as damaging as active persecution, as it creates a permissive environment for violence.

Complicity through Inaction: The state's failure to act decisively against militants and provide adequate security measures allowed the genocide to unfold. This inaction can be seen as a form of complicity, enabling the perpetrators to carry out their campaign of terror without significant opposition.

Social and Political Factors: Societal factors, including majoritarian nationalism and religious extremism, have also

contributed to the genocide. The rise of militant Islamist ideologies in the region, supported by external actors, has exacerbated the targeting of minority communities. The interplay between local politics and religious extremism has fueled a narrative of exclusion and violence against the Kashmiri Pandits.

Militant Ideologies: The influence of militant Islamist ideologies, propagated through various channels, has played a significant role in the targeting of Kashmiri Pandits. These ideologies promote a vision of the valley that excludes non-Muslim communities, fostering an environment of intolerance and violence.

Political Dynamics: Local political dynamics, including the rise of separatist movements and the influence of external actors, have further complicated the situation. These movements often exploit religious and ethnic divisions to further their agendas, exacerbating the persecution of minority communities like the Kashmiri Pandits.

Legal and Ethical Implications: International Law and Moral Responsibility

Under international law, the acts committed against the Kashmiri Pandit community constitute genocide. The systematic targeting, intent to destroy the community, and forced displacement align with the definitions provided by the UN Genocide Convention. Legal scholars highlight that the criteria for genocide, including acts intended to destroy, in whole or in part, a particular group, are met in the case of the Kashmiri Pandits.

Legal Definitions: The criteria for genocide under international law include acts such as killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction. The experiences of the Kashmiri Pandits meet these criteria, warranting legal recognition and action.

Ethical Considerations: Ethically, the continued neglect and marginalization of the Kashmiri Pandits raise significant concerns. The moral responsibility of the state to ensure justice, restitution, and the preservation of cultural heritage is paramount. Philosophers and ethicists argue that the failure to address historical injustices perpetuates the suffering and undermines the principles of justice and human rights.

Case Study Comparisons

The Armenian Genocide: The Armenian Genocide of 1915, where the Ottoman Empire systematically exterminated its Armenian population, provides a historical parallel to the Kashmiri Pandit genocide. Both genocides involved the use of state power to facilitate or fail to prevent mass atrocities, highlighting the critical role of government actions and inactions in such crises.

The Rwandan Genocide: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994, where the Hutu majority targeted the Tutsi minority, offers another comparative framework. In both cases, propaganda and the failure of authorities to intervene are common elements in both the Rwandan and Kashmiri Pandit genocides. These comparisons highlight the importance of timely intervention and the devastating consequences of state inaction.

Propaganda and Division: Just as the Rwandan genocide was fueled by propaganda that dehumanized the Tutsi population, the Kashmiri Pandit genocide was exacerbated by terrorist rhetoric and threats that incited violence against the community. The failure to counter these narratives allowed the violence to escalate.

Recommendations for Addressing the Genocide

Addressing the Kashmiri Pandit genocide requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that includes legal recognition, rehabilitation, and measures to ensure cultural preservation and political inclusion.

Legal Recognition and Accountability

There is an urgent need for the formal recognition of the Kashmiri Pandit genocide by both the Indian state and the international community. This should be followed by legal actions to hold those responsible accountable, through domestic tribunals as envisaged in proposed Panun Kashmir's Prevention and Punishment of Genocide and atrocities bill 2020.

Legal Frameworks: Utilizing existing legal frameworks, such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, could provide a basis for prosecuting those responsible for the genocide. Establishing a national commission to investigate and document the atrocities would also be a significant step towards justice.

Comprehensive Rehabilitation Programs

A comprehensive rehabilitation program for displaced Kashmiri Pandits is essential for their return to a dignified life. This program should include adequate housing, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, along with security guarantees for those wishing to return to their homeland.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage

The cultural and religious heritage of the Kashmiri Pandit community must be preserved and promoted. This includes restoring temples, historical sites, and supporting the community's cultural practices. Educational initiatives should also be undertaken to raise awareness about the community's history and contributions.

Cultural Centers: Establishing cultural centers dedicated to the Kashmiri Pandit heritage can help preserve and promote their culture. These centers could host exhibitions, events, and educational programs to ensure that future generations

understand and appreciate the community's rich history.

Educational Curricula: Incorporating the history of Kashmiri Pandits into national educational curricula can help raise awareness and promote understanding among the broader population. This could include developing textbooks and courses that cover the history and contributions of the community.

Political and Social Inclusion

Ensuring the political and social inclusion of Kashmiri Pandits is crucial for their long-term rehabilitation and integration. This can be achieved through reserved political representation, anti-discrimination laws, and policies that promote inclusivity.

Separate Homeland

The concept of a separate homeland for Kashmiri Pandits has emerged as a response to their prolonged displacement and continued persecution. Advocates argue that establishing a dedicated region within Jammu and Kashmir, where Kashmiri Pandits can return and live with security and autonomy, is essential for preserving their cultural identity and ensuring their safety. This proposed homeland would be a geographically contiguous area where the community can rebuild their lives free from the threat of violence and discrimination. Supporters of the idea emphasize that without a secure and self-governed region, the survival of the Kashmiri Pandit community in their ancestral land remains in jeopardy. However, this proposal is also met with challenges, including political opposition and concerns about further fragmenting the region's complex social fabric. Nonetheless, for many displaced Kashmiri Pandits, a separate homeland represents the only viable solution to reclaiming their right to live in peace and dignity in their own homeland.

Anti-Discrimination Laws: Implementing and enforcing anti-discrimination laws that protect Kashmiri Pandits in all spheres of life—education, employment, and social interactions—would help to mitigate the biases they face. These laws should be robust, with clear mechanisms for reporting and addressing grievances to ensure that Kashmiri

Pandits can live without fear of prejudice or exclusion.

Community Empowerment: Programs aimed at empowering the Kashmiri Pandit community, particularly the younger generation, are essential. This could include leadership training, community development initiatives, and support for entrepreneurship. Empowering the community to rebuild and thrive on their terms would be a powerful step towards healing and resilience.

Path to Reparation and Justice

The genocide of Kashmiri Pandits is a dark chapter in history that demands recognition, justice, and reparation.Addressing this tragedy is not just about acknowledging past wrongs but also about building a future where such atrocities are prevented. The path to justice involves legal recognition, comprehensive rehabilitation, cultural preservation, and ensuring political and social inclusion.

International Support: The international community has a role to play in supporting these efforts. This could involve advocating for recognition of the genocide, providing technical assistance for rehabilitation programs, and ensuring that the rights of Kashmiri Pandits are upheld in global forums. The global community's acknowledgment of their plight would not only validate their suffering but also serve as a deterrent against future atrocities.

The journey of the Kashmiri Pandit community is one of resilience and strength. Despite the immense suffering, they continue to fight for justice and the right to return to their homeland. By addressing the root causes of the genocide, ensuring justice, and fostering an environment of reparation, there is hope that the Kashmiri Pandit community can rebuild and thrive once again.

Performativity, state power and Genocidal Aesthetics

The recent scuba diving event of PM Narendra Modi was very similar to Putin's acts. He scubadived into Arabain sea and offered prayers on the seabed at the submerged Dwarka city associated with Lord Krishna. His statement that followed the event was very significant. He said that the event involved less personal grit and more religious devotion.

Dr. Dileep Kumar Kaul
Director, JIGAS

Let us begin with two friends—Vladimir Putin and Narendra Modi; both heads of their states, with their power and status at a significant level, nationally and internationally. A 2009 photograph of shirtless, bare-chested Putin was mocked at by G7 leaders in 2022. His stout body showed that hard work had been put in to make it like that.

What was Putin's response to this act of mocking?

He said that western leaders would look disgusting if they tried to be shirtless like him because they abuse alcohol and do not do sports. He was right. No western leader has been a serious Judoka as a young man like Putin. He earned third place at Russian Junior Nationals. As the head of the state, he practices Judo with Russian Judo team to show the level he was at in Judo. That was a unique kind of identity for a politician who headed his state.

The recent scuba diving event of PM Narendra Modi was very similar to Putin's acts. He scubadived into Arabain sea and offered prayers on the seabed at the submerged Dwarka city associated with Lord Krishna. His statement that followed the event was very significant. He said that the event involved less personal grit and more religious devotion. The meaning was the same that Putin's statement had for European Leaders. He meant that all European leaders were not as tough as he and indulged in alcohol abuse. PM Modi meant that no PM before him had physical toughness and religious devotion. Everyone before him was lax in every respect. Both established themselves as unprecedented leaders of their states. Both converted their identities into performative expressions of power and socio-political status. This performativity does not create a superficial image of power. It shows that how the persona of a head of a state can be carried to extremes and given a place in everyday politics. This toughness of Modi as head of the state and representative of state power was again fortified with the event of Yoga performed in Kashmir. Yoga is from Hindu tradition and the PM had already referred to Kashmir as land or Sufis. So it was a Hindu act performed on a Sufi (Muslim) land. This was a performative expression of the secular aesthetics that has been the driving force of Indian polity since 1947.

What are performative expressions/ performativity?

The foundations of the study performativity were laid by British language philosopher John Austin. He gave the concept of performative utterances, the utterances that describe the world but that is not all. They also create relations in this world. If we see this is Indic perspective we can understand that performative acts are not limited to utterances. Take the festival of Rakhi. It is re-enacted every year to reinforce the relationship between a brother and a sister. A woman has just to tie a thread on your wrist and she irrespective of caste creed and colour is your sister. "Rakhi creates a sister and a brother"—that utterance is always at the background of this festival whether spoken every time or not.

American philosopher and gender studies scholar Judith Butler gives a very clear concept of performativity in her seminal essay— "Rethinking Vulnerability and resistance". She asks some very stimulating questions about the acts of speech— "Does speech act on us, prior to our speaking, and if did not act on us, if it were not actively working on us, could we speak at all? And perhaps it is not a matter of sequence, does speech continue to act on us at the very moment in which we speak, so that we may well think we are acting, but we are also acted on at that very same time." We can easily understand how speech was acting on the acts committed by Vladimir Putin and PM Modi.

Judith Butler asks these questions in the perspective of gender. The questions draw our attention to the fact that the structure of gender (language) acts on us even when we recreate (speak)it.

This is linguistic performativity. If gender discourse affects us, religious and political discourses also affect us deeply. The insights given by Judith Butler make it clear that these discourses create ideals and norms of their spheres which find expression in our gestures and actions. They create

our identity. Our identity is essentially made of these images, ideals and norms that cannot be forgotten. These norms and ideals are created by discourses constituted by language. If language acts on us before we act, and acts on us with every action we do at any moment we, as per Judith Butler have to understand gender performativity as "gender assignment." We are gendered in every way before we understand anything about the acting of gender norms on us and how they shape us as individuals. This happens before we may choose to express gender norms and reproduce them in our own chosen way. In the process of performativity choice comes very late. In the same way religious performativity is to be understood as "religious assignment" and political performativity as "political assignment." In case of Putin it was gender assignment along with political assignment working simultaneously while as in case of PM Modi, gender, political and religious assignments were working simultaneously. Deep sea diving showed that he had the level of fitness better than any Indian PM, the country had seen so far. This fitness was reasserted again at the performative event of Yoga organised in Kashmir. That was an unprecedented event that executed the political assignment that PM Modi aimed at. He had already called Kashmir the land of Sufis. Yoga was an event of Hindu tradition being organised in the Sufi land of Kashmir. This strengthened the already woven linguistic discourse woven around him, expressing him as an unprecedented Hindu leader.

Is Kashmir a land of Sufis?

Yes, there have been many Sufis in Kashmir. But when the head of a state makes this statement, he gives an identity to the place. This identification of Kashmir as as Sufi land took Sufism as a consistently soft form of Islam. But this is not true when we analyse the genocidal history of Kashmir. Shamasuddin Araqi, a "Sufi" Shia of Noorbakshia school of Islamic Jurisprudence arrived in Kashmir in 1496. He demolished Innumerable temples and erected Khanqahs (the lodgings for Sufis) on them. He committed atrocities on Kashmiri Pandits that led to their second exodus of Kashmir. This draws our attention to an important aspect of performativity. Performativity allows people to identify with some ways of speaking and appearance. That is how PM Modi and President Putin were identified by people. This kind of identification is not intellectually or analytically placed in political, academic, historical or media discourse. Such knowledge is not needed for performative acts. Such acts are meant to facilitate populism through creation of strong emotional bonds between the leaders and supporters, who are seen as embodying radical changes in the system.

If we focus on the acts of PM Modi, the political performativity of his acts is derived from the elimination of historical facts from the discourse he employs to weave the Sufi identity of Kashmir. Shaivism thrived in Kashmir before Islam and is still a significant school of Philosophy followed and practised all over the world. Elimination of this identifying factor of Kashmir brings down the whole exercise done by PM Modi to the phenomenon of performative activism. Performative activism is a kind of activism that is done to increase one's social capital and not because of the commitment of a person to a cause. That explains the activism of PM Modi. He projects an image that he is committed towards equality and secularism. But he has actually done nothing to dismantle the communal structures within the Kashmiri society. This is proved by the fact that an extremely radicalised element Engineer Rashid won Baramulla Parliamentary constituency with a sizeable margin of his primary rival being ex-CM Omar Abdullah of National Conference. Polling 4,72, 481 votes for an extremely radicalised candidate proves that the support for radicalised ideology is not waning. The truth of performative activism is that one thing is said and what is said is not done but harmful choices are made. Performative activism only strengthens and maintain the genocidal environment.

In a genocidal environment performative activism can be used to silence the voice of the victims. A performative activist like PM Modi appears to be working for the victims of genocide when he himself gives approval to the films like "The Kashmir Files" and says that the truth has been portrayed in the film. The truth portrayed in the film is truth of the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits. But the Indian state is not ready to accept that Kashmiri Pandits have been subjected to genocide. And when genocide is not accepted the laws necessary to check it are not being framed. The impunity for the perpetrator stays and so do the genocidal acts.

But the same PM goes Rwanda in July 2018 and presents 200 locally sourced cows to Rwandan poor to support the poverty reduction programme of the government. What was the need to gift cows when India has extended a credit of US $ 200 million to Rwanda? The Rwandan genocide of 1994 was not just genocide. It was a bovicide also. Tutsi victims were a cow-rearing culture. The perpetrators were ordered by their leaders to kill Tutsis and eat their cows so that their culture was destroyed along with their economy that was based on cows. About 90% of the cattle of the country had been slaughtered during genocide. So gifting cows to them did not mean just their economic empowerment. It was aimed at their cultural empowerment also. This proves that PM Modi had thorough understanding of the history of genocide in Rwanda. But when it comes to Kashmir, he as the Head of the Indian state is seen doing everything to deny the genocide. Saying something and doing things contrary to it. This shows that the state power of India cannot but resort to performative activism while dealing with the situation in Kashmir.

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Genocidal aesthetics is a mode of existence which is brutal, savage and inhuman. The perpetrator of genocide takes pride in existence of his identity that has been earned through the destruction of the identity of the "other". For him the existence of only his identity is aesthetic.

Performative activism is nothing but the maintenance of secular aesthetics. The aim of secular aesthetics is to hide the truth and that has been a characteristic feature of Indian polity since Independence.PM Modi has given new dimensions to secular aesthetics through his performative activism.

Secularism is different from secular aesthetics. Secularism means separating government from religion. This in other words means that the government will not favour any religion specifically, while framing its policies. People belonging to all religions will be treated equally. Secular aesthetics. As the state power is transformed into performative activism, it indulges into secular aesthetics, the vision of a beautiful society the majority of which maintains peace through tolerating the tyranny of a minority. This happens because the state power finds itself unable to dismantle the communal structures created by the tyrannical minority. These communal structures have been created by the minority community through the course of history. Under the secular aesthetic practices the state power blocks the sources of knowledge that may talk about the historical perpetratorhood of the minority community. Tolerating the perpetrator is the unwritten principle of secular aesthetics. But the perpetrator minority visualises the beauty of the future of its community in its existence without any non-identical community. This gives rise to genocidal aesthetics because if only one community has to exist it has to annihilate other communities. When secular aesthetics aims at tolerating the tyranny of the perpetrator it naturally lays the foundations of genocidal aesthetics. It tells the potential victim to withhold his reaction for the sake of the state and nation. It even creates a social environment where forgetting the historical victimhood by the victims is considered a virtue. Reconciliation with the perpetrator is the ultimate result of secular aesthetics. It leaves the perpetrator untouched and free to exercise his will that is governed by his genocidal aesthetics.

Genocidal aesthetics is a mode of existence which is brutal, savage and inhuman. The perpetrator of genocide takes pride in existence of his identity that has been earned through the destruction of the identity of the "other". For him the existence of only his identity is aesthetic. For the survivors the re-establishment of their identity is aesthetic. They do it through the artistic expression of their suffering through fiction, drama, music etc. They want to give expression to their suffering because sharing your pain alleviates it. Theodore Adorno, a frontline scholar of Frankfurt school of critical theory, social philosopher and musicologist, in his stimulating book " Aesthetic Theory" puts it like this, "The artwork is not only the echo of suffering, it diminishes it." All victims of genocide, Jewish, Bosnian, Rwandan, Cambodians, Kashmiri Pandits, have given artistic expression to their sufferings. If we see it from the perspective of a perpetrator it is easy to infer that " The artwork of a perpetrator is not only the echo of his brutality, it glorifies it." This glorification of brutality creates the genocidal aesthetics. Let us have a look at some examples of the poetry that gives expression to genocidal aesthetics:

These are some lines from a very famous poem of Dr. Iqbal (1877-1938), a renowned and powerful Urdu poet:

काट कर रख दिए कुफ़्फ़ार के लश्कर किस ने
किस ने ठंडा किया आतिश-कदा-ए-ईराँ को
किस ने फिर ज़िंदा किया तज़्किरा-ए-यज़्दाँ को
कौन सी क़ौम फ़क़त तेरी तलबगार हुई
और तेरे लिए ज़हमत-कश-ए-पैकार हुई
किस की शमशीर जहाँगीर जहाँ-दार हुई
किस की तकबीर से दुनिया तिरी बेदार हुई
किस की हैबत से सनम सहमे हुए रहते थे
मुँह के बल गिर के हू-अल्लाहू-अहद कहते थे।

(Which people slaughtered the armies of infidels
And extinguished the fire pots of Iran
Which people revived the discussions about God
Which were the people who sought just you
And took the troubles of never racking
campaigns for you
Who were they whose sword conquered the world
Whose Takbeer awakened your world
Whose horror struck and scared the idols of deities
Made them fall flat on their faces and utter
Hu-allah-o-ahad.)

The historical achievements of Muslims and physical and cultural genocide associated with those achievements are enlisted in this poem. Iqbal's poetry is a very bright example of genocidal aesthetics. He provided the Muslims of India with such narratives of Islamic culture and politics that he is considered as one who gave rise movement for the creation of Pakistan. Every word he writes unleashes a formative force that stimulates Muslims to do active work fror their community and the line of thought associated with it.

Such examples of genocidal aesthetics are found in Noor Mohammad, a Sufi Hindi poet who lived till 1770 CE. He wrote his famous work "Anurag Bansuri" (The flute of love) in Awadhi dialect of Hindi language. His language is more

Sanskritised than other Sufi poets. But the content is hardly different from what we find in Iqbal an example of whose poetry is given above. He praises his poem "Anurag Bansuri" in the following words:

सुनतै जौ यह सबद मनोहर ।
होत अचेत कृष्ण मुरलीधार॥
यह मुहम्मदी जन की बोली ।
जामैं कंद नबातैं घोली॥
बहुत देवता को चित हरै ।
बहु मूरति औंधी होइ परै॥
बहुत देवहरा ढाहि गिरावै ।
संखनाद की रीति मिटावै॥
जहँ इसलामी मुख सों निसरी बात।
तहाँ सकल सुख मंगल, कष्ट नसात॥

(when listens to these sweet words, Krishna,
the flute wielding god falls unconscious.
This is the language of the followers of Muhammad,
so sweet and attractive.
It steals the hearts of many Hindu deities,
many idols fall flat on their faces
This language demolishes many temples,
destroys the tradition of blowing of conches
Where words flow from an Islamic mouth,
every comfort and prosperity is there and all troubles
are destroyed)

The two poets separated by a time period of more than a century have amazingly same kind of genocidal perceptions and aesthetics. What is amazing is that both poets feel a sense of pride and delight in the situation of idols of Hindu deities falling flat on their faces. This shows that there is a tradition of genocidal aesthetics associated with a specific line of religious thought. Thorough research is required unveil and analyse such genocidal aesthetics in art forms all over the world.

Talking about genocidal aesthetics raises an ethical question. How far is it permissible that genocidal aesthetics is permissible and glorified in a society? We may have again to turn to Theodore Adorno for the answer. In his very important work "Negative Dialectics" he underlines the importance of artwork in a genocidal environment. If the "other" is being destroyed under a plan and system, it is how a genocidal system works. Genocidal aesthetics in an artwork record and acknowledges it. Genocide is a thinking that is not in tune with the existence of the "other". The concept of the right to existence of the "other" is set aside by the extremity of the genocidal thinking and this makes us to turn away from it. If it hints at the glorification of barbarism, the genocidal aesthetics compels us to think about the aesthetics of life. Adorno writes in "Negative Dialectics", "If thought is not measured by the extremity that eludes the concept, it is from the outset in the nature of the musical accompaniment with which the SS liked to drown the screams of the victims."

Same was the case in Kashmir. Songs of genocidal aesthetics were being played on the loudspeakers of the mosques to drown the voices and existence of the victims. It is a welcome sign that these songs are forgotten now and folk singers are being foregrounded.

But the danger is far from over. Performative activism, that has become the habit of state power in Kashmir, has been reinforcing secular aesthetics that lends strength to genocidal aesthetics. Many temples along with idols have been destroyed in Kashmir. Some days back more than a century old heritage building belonging to Kashmiri Pandits in Anantnag district of Kashmir were burnt to ashes and shown on Facebook and other social media. The same modus operandi was employed by ISIS. Destruction of the temples was the destruction of the past. The destruction of the buildings after 34 years of genocidal assault and subsequent exodus sends the message from the genocidaires that your present will be destroyed anytime as per our wish. This is performative destruction behind which the language and texts of the religion have always remained operative. Under such circumstances it is not difficult to imagine what kind of future is in store. The dangers that spring from the performative activism of the state is manifesting, time and again, not only in J&K, but all over India.

Genocide over and over again: From the Armenians to the Syrians

By: Ellen J. Kennedy (Reproduced from worldwithoutgenocide.org)

Innocent civilians were rounded up, put onto trains, and deported to a network of 25 concentration camps where they suffered torture, medical experimentation, starvation, disease, and death. Those who didn't perish in the concentration camps were sent on a death march, a forced march during which the prisoners were left to die along the way from hunger, thirst, disease, abuse, or outright murder.

An estimated 1.5 million men, women, and children perished.
This was a systematic slaughter aimed at eliminating a minority religious group that the majority had labeled 'vermin.'
This was not the Holocaust. This was the genocide of the Armenians, 1915-1923, what Winston Churchill described as an "administrative holocaust," and he noted, "This crime was planned and executed for political reasons … for clearing Turkish soil of a Christian race."

Who speaks today of the Armenians?
Adolf Hitler used the catastrophe to justify the Nazi murder of 6 million Jews, saying in 1939, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"
When we don't know or don't remember, we are prone to repeat the same cycles of violence, destruction, and displacement. Today there is a link between two atrocities that happened in the very same place yet are separated across a century of time.

Deir-zor. Aleppo. Tall Abyad. Ras al-Ayn. Shaddadi. Kessab. These cities were once part of the Ottoman Empire, and in these cities a little more than a century ago, on April 24, 1915, the Turkish government arrested and executed several hundred Armenian intellectuals. After that, ordinary Armenians were rounded up and sent on death marches through the Mesopotamian desert without food or water, forced to walk naked in the blazing sun, shot if they stopped to rest.

At the same time, Ottoman rulers organized killing squads to carry out, as one officer put it, "the liquidation of the Christian elements." They drowned people in rivers, threw them off cliffs, crucified them, and burned them alive. Bones litter the countryside yet today. Armenian children were stolen and given to Turkish families. Women were raped, marked with tattoos showing "ownership," and forced into Turkish harems and households. Local Turks seized Armenians' homes and property.
By the time the genocide ended, there were only about 200,000 Armenians remaining in the Ottoman Empire – some of them saved by Turkish "upstanders."

A century later
These cities of Armenian tragedy are located in today's country of Syria. And today there is war, devastation, hunger, torture, displacement, forced disappearance, and death – in these very same places once again.
The Syrian government, under dictator Bashar al-Assad, is waging a brutal war against its own citizens. By the numbers: 500,000 people killed by poison gas, barrel bombs, starvation, disease, and torture; 6.6 million displaced within their own country; and 5 million refugees who have fled from Syria. Assad's war is a politicide, an effort to eliminate people who began protesting against their dictator in March 2011.

What connects these two tragedies, besides the terrible coincidence of brutalities in the same places? The underlying cause of the violence: climate disruptions.

Drought and genocide

Droughts and floods devastate agriculture, and when people's bellies are empty, they do what's necessary to survive. They can easily be motivated to blame others for their despair and to take out their anger and frustration against a scapegoat, typically a religious or ethnic minority group. That was the tragedy of the Armenian genocide.

In 1873-75 the Ottoman Empire was stricken with record droughts. Edgar Whitaker, British editor of an Istanbul newspaper, wrote, "A struggle against death from starvation has been going on [in the Ottoman Empire] for the last twenty months, and the whole population has been decimated, enfeebled by disease, and so scattered and dispersed, that the whole of its social system had been utterly disorganized."

The climate events combined with regional political and economic vulnerability to turn drought into catastrophe. In a war with Russia a few years later, the Ottoman Empire lost a great deal of its European territory. Turkish citizens from those regions came streaming back into the Empire needing food, housing, and work, but they came back to a country devastated by drought. This crisis magnified already-existing ethnic and religious divisions: Muslim against Christian; Turk against Assyrian, Armenian, and Greek.

For the next several years, the drought conditions intensified, worsening in 1879-1881 when there were urban bread riots. The "Armenian Question" depicted the Armenians as Christian infidels allied to the enemy Russia and responsible for the collapsing Ottoman Muslim economy and political empire.

It was a small step to go from scapegoating the Armenians to exterminating them.

A hundred years later, Syria's tragedy also started with a drought. From 2006-2011 up to 60 percent of Syria's land experienced the worst long-term drought and most severe set of crop failures since agricultural civilizations began in the Fertile Crescent many millennia ago.

In 2009, the UN reported that more than 800,000 Syrians had lost their entire livelihood because of the droughts. By 2011, about 1 million Syrians were food-insecure and as many as 3 million, about 14 percent of the entire population, were driven into extreme poverty.

Rural families fled to the cities. Crop failures in the farming villages around Aleppo alone led 200,000 rural villagers to leave. Syrian cities were already struggling to cope with Iraqi refugees from the U.S. invasion in 2003, and this current crisis added insurmountable burdens.

Hunger and desperation, water shortages and crop failures, continued population growth and massive internal displacement all resulted in Syria's originally peaceful opposition movement. The contestation with the Assad government quickly devolved into one of the worst crises on the planet.

A path to peace?

In the short term, the thousands of starving and ill Syrians, both inside of Syria and in refugee camps in neighboring countries, must have access to food, water, medical treatment, and shelter. In the long term, any peace will be unsustainable unless the fundamental needs of food and water can be assured.

During the Armenian genocide, Syria was a refuge for families who survived the forced marches and mass violence in the desert. Today, Armenia has welcomed more than 30,000 Armenian refugees from Syria.

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